



2002 Wetlands Reserve Program

Success Story

Thousands of ducks were in the sky over the Raft Creek bottoms along the White River a couple weeks before duck season -- a site that is returning to its heyday thanks to the Wetlands Reserve Program.

Historically, waterfowl by the hundreds of thousands (approximately 23-25 percent of the waterfowl that winter in Arkansas) stage in the area that had been converted to mostly cropland.

"We initially reclaimed 3,000 acres during the 1994 WRP sign-up period. But, now we have an adjoining 4,008-acre complex developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service in association with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and Ducks Unlimited," said Jody Pagan, a biologist in the NRCS state office.

The area features 1,400 acres of water, 2,000 acres of trees and 350 acres of native prairies (blue stem, switch grass and others).

"This is the first time in Northeast Arkansas we have used native prairie grass," said Nelson Childers, a biologist in the Jonesboro Technical Service Center. "The 4,000-acre complex highlights the benefits of WRP not just in Arkansas but throughout the nation as a way to revitalize wetlands and educate the public on their functions and values."

Seventy-five percent of the hydrology work has been completed and 50 percent of the trees have been planted.

Arkansas Summary

Overview

The Wetlands Reserve Program is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property. Restoring, protecting and enhancing the functions and values of wetland ecosystems remain the focus of Wetlands Reserve Program in Arkansas.

Specifically, the focus is narrowed in the Natural State to restoring bottomland hardwood forest ecosystems and improvement of water quality in the Lower Mississippi River Valley through reforestation and hydrology restoration.

Arkansas is currently ranked third in the nation in enrolled Wetlands Reserve Program acres. This equals approximately 104,000 active acres of Wetlands Reserve Program lands enrolled with approximately 32,000 acres of shallow water habitat created and 75,000 acres of reforested lands.

Accomplishments

By placing agricultural lands into Wetlands Reserve Program, the Natural Resources Conservation Service provides resting, loafing and foraging habitat for migratory waterfowl, songbirds, shorebirds, wading birds and other wetland species.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Arkansas is a national leader in developing new techniques for restoring and managing wetland complexes, using the latest technology to annually reforest 8,000 acres of bottomland hardwoods and restore hydrology on more than 5,000 acres.

The 2002 hydrology construction season was an especially productive time for Arkansas. Field staff completed a record 7,500 acres of shallow water habitat in a single construction year.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Arkansas takes great pride in contributing to the many species of water birds observed on Wetlands Reserve Program lands. Many of these species have not been reported since the turn of the century or have never been documented in the state.

Outlook

The improvement of water quality as a value of wetlands and wetland restoration is an often-overlooked benefit of the Wetlands Reserve Program. Enrolling large contiguous tracts of farmland to serve as sediment retention areas will greatly decrease sediment in major rivers such as the White and Black rivers in central Arkansas.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service in Arkansas also sees great potential in enrolling more acreage statewide in the Wetlands Reserve Program as the 2002 Farm Bill progresses.

State Contact

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Arkansas Dollars and Contracts by Congressional District

Congressional Districts	Fiscal Year 2002		Cumulative Total (97-02)	
	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts
District 1	\$8,027,608	13	\$56,166,268	173
District 2	\$9,308,846	4	\$21,160,766	25
District 3	\$0	0	\$42,780	1
District 4	\$3,661,746	4	\$38,079,186	45
State Totals	\$20,998,200	21	\$115,449,000	244

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